

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Massing of the Colors - Ft Lewis	February 11
National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans	February 11-17
Congressional Medal of Honor Day	March 25
Nakamura/Okubo Medal of Honor Commemorative Program in Seattle	March 25
Prisoner of War Recognition Day	April 9
Volunteer Week	April 15-21
Loyalty Day	May 1
National Nurses Week	May 6-12
Armed Forces Day	May 19
Moment of Remembrance Candle Lighting at the Capitol	May 21
Memorial Day Programs at Retsil and Orting	May 28

## Ergonomic Awareness

The Washington State Department of Labor and Industries adopted an ergonomics rule on May 26, 2000, which addresses work-related musculoskeletal disorders such as carpal tunnel syndrome, low-back disorders and tendinitis.

WDVA will begin implementing Awareness Education and Hazard Analysis in March 2001. This is one year ahead of the "voluntary compliance" deadline.

Muscles used in one position for extended periods of time will fatigue. This affects circulation to the working muscles and literally makes the job harder and more uncomfortable. Stretching improves the blood flow and keeps the working muscles fresh. Exercise is one of the best ways to relieve the demands of repetitive movement, awkward posture, position, force and strain.

To reduce stress and fatigue –

- ◆ Stretch the lower back by placing your hands on your hips and gently bend backwards.
- ◆ Stretch the shoulders, arms and ribcage by reaching overhead as far as you can and hold for a few seconds.
- ◆ While stretching, do side bends to warm up muscles that can get stiff from sitting.
- ◆ Roll your shoulders forward and backward with your arms at your side.

- ◆ Put your palms together in front of your chest. Slowly lower your hands until you feel a mild stretch in your forearms.
- ◆ Make a fist with both hands and then spread fingers out as far as you can. This can reduce muscle tension resulting from grasping or pinching activities.
- ◆ While sitting down, pull your leg up to your chest slowly by grasping the shin. Hold it for 5-10 seconds, then do the other leg.
- ◆ Stretch shoulders and upper back by interlacing fingers behind the head and pull your shoulder blades toward each other. This will help release tension or tightness in shoulders and upper back.
- ◆ Stretch arms and upper back by straightening your arms in front of you with fingers interlaced and palms facing away from your body.
- ◆ Turn your head from side to side. Other neck stretches include tipping your head towards your shoulders and lowering your chin to your chest.
- ◆ Stretch shoulders and arms by interlacing fingers behind your back, palms facing your body, and slowly turn elbows inward while straightening your arms.
- ◆ Frequently stand, take a deep breath through your nose, hold it for two seconds, then exhale through your mouth.
- ◆ When you get a scheduled break from your job, get up, move around, maybe step outside. The point is to get out of your work environment, if only for a few minutes.

Stay tuned for more information.  
– Oscar Green, Safety Officer

**@WDVA**

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February 2001

For employees of the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs

## A Week to Honor Hospitalized Veterans

The National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Week - Feb. 11 to 17 - provides an opportunity to say 'thank you' to the more than 100,000 veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces who receive care every day in VA medical centers, outpatient clinics, domiciliaries, and nursing homes.

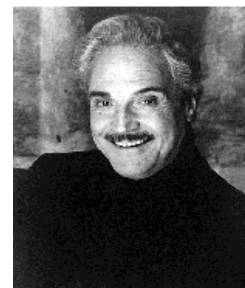
This annual VA National Salute program began in 1978 when the VA took over sponsorship of a program started in 1974 by the humanitarian organization, No Greater Love, Inc.

The purpose of the program – to pay tribute and express appreciation to hospitalized veterans – is also designed to increase community awareness of the role of the VA medical center and encourage citizens to visit hospitalized veterans and become involved as volunteers.

During the National Salute, VA invites individuals, veterans groups, military personnel, civic organizations, businesses, schools, local media, celebrities and sports stars to participate in a variety of activities at the VA medical centers. The activities and events include: special ward visits and Valentine distributions; photo opportunities; school essay contests; special recreation activities; and veteran recognition programs.

Last year, students at Bethel Junior High School in Spanaway visited the VA Puget Sound Health Care System at American Lake. They provided patients, staff and visitors with a special musical show, reminiscent of the days of Bob Hope and his special USO tours. The visit, organized by WDVA's Jane Adamson, a volunteer service officer at American Lake, was a prime example of special events that take place all across the country.

This year, in addition to the local activities, National Chairman Hal Linden will visit hospitalized veterans during the week and at various times throughout the year. Linden will also serve as spokesperson for the VA Voluntary Service, whose staff plan and execute local programs of activities at VA medical centers.



Hal Linden

For the 13th consecutive year, newspaper columnist Ann Landers devoted a column in January to the National Salute, asking readers to send Valentine cards and letters to hospitalized veterans at their nearest VA medical centers.

"I know of nothing you can do that would cost so little and bring so much pleasure to the men and women who were willing to lay down their lives for us," wrote Ms. Landers. "They deserve to be remembered."

Landers' request in previous years has generated more than a million cards and letters.

For information on volunteering, contact: Orting – Lynn Zemke – (360) 893-4511; Retsil – Catherine Shaw – (360) 895-4376; VA Puget Sound Health Care System – (206) 762-1010; or visit the VA Voluntary Service webpage at [www.va.gov/volunteer/](http://www.va.gov/volunteer/)

## WDVA Launches V-Net

"Out with the old and in with the new" can best describe the complete overhaul of the agency-wide intranet.

According to Communications Director Jim Guthrie, the department's new V-Net (short for Veterans Affairs Network) will be a key internal communications tool for agency management and staff.

"It's become very clear to me through comments made by staff, and concerns expressed by management, that internal communications within the agency is an area in need of marked improvement," said Guthrie. "And the V-Net is a big, high-tech step in that direction."

"There is so much going on with the agency – such as the master plan – that by the time something gets printed, it may be too late," added Guthrie. "With this internal webpage, information can be distributed as it happens, and in some cases, even before."

"If people want to know what's going on, the V-Net is going to have it first and fresh – every time."

In addition to breaking news and daily updates on legislation impacting the agency, staff can access updated phone lists – including a search feature, agency publications, news releases and advisories, and staff recognition.

Guthrie added the V-Net is just one tool being implemented to improve agency communications. He said the new staff newsletter detailing activities at the two homes, Central Office and Vet Services, along with the quarterly Veteran Voices, will become regular staples for staff to review.

"I understand not everyone within the agency has a computer, or e-mail access, so other ways of communicating will still be needed," said Guthrie. "But for those who do have computers, check it out."



# Retsil Review

## Laundry is an on-going task everyone understands

Think doing laundry once a week is a chore? Try doing it all day, every day for a family of more than 500.

Under the leadership of Laundry Manager Mary Treese, Retsil's dedicated staff provides efficient laundry services to the home's 346 residents, as well as the 183 residents at Orting.

Day after day, soiled linens, towels and personal clothing come in from the two facilities and as regular as clockwork, are returned clean and fresh.



*Katy Logan, Retsil seamstress, has been with the agency for 16 years.*

"This is actually considered a small operation in the industry," said Treese. "We operate with three, 200-pound washers, one, 55-pound washer and four, 125-pound dryers.

Upon arrival, the soiled laundry is



*The laundry crew processes 6,400 pounds of soiled weight laundry daily.*

weighed on a floor scale, tagged and sorted. After being loaded into the washers, an automatic, solid-base chemical system is programmed to dispense the detergent. Once clean, the clothes are unloaded through a door at the back of the machine into a room where the dryers run, eliminating cross-contamination. After drying, it's on to the folding, pressing and hanging areas.

"One of the biggest challenges we have is doing the personal laundry for the residents," continued Treese. "First, we have to tag each item, then check the pockets and sort – just like you do at home – and then all the clean garments are hung on hangers for delivery."

Staff rotates weekly between the different rooms, reducing some of the physical and mental strain involved in certain tasks. According to Treese, the flu season, holidays and heavier care-load produce a higher volume of laundry than other

times. Infectious control standards require wearing special covers, gloves and old shoes when working in the soil room. Those items are then removed before staff can proceed anywhere else in the facility.

After clothes are cleaned, seamstress Katy Logan provides another important service – tears are mended, missing buttons and broken zippers are replaced and individual requests are cheerfully met. Logan provides aprons and potholders for the food service staff, carry bags and cushions for wheelchairs, and special covers for body pillows. She makes shower curtains, cart covers and recovers the bus seats. Even requests for arm slings, arm pads and window curtains don't daunt her. Logan – who maintains the three sewing machines herself – has been Retsil's seamstress for the past seven years and a member of the laundry staff for 16 years. She turned 70 last fall.

### Retsil Laundry by the Numbers:

6,400 pounds per day  
2,184,560 pounds last year  
16 staff

*For a more in-depth look at the Retsil laundry, see WDVA's V-Net.*

# Orting Review

## Ceramics teacher considered Queen of every day

For more than 18 years, Gina Weekley has been teaching ceramics at Orting. As a contract worker, she can be found spending six days a week, two hours a day, instructing nursing care and barracks residents in the finer points of producing professionally completed works of art.

During that same 18 years, this once-upon-a-time Queen for a Day contestant has done more than 11,700 hours of volunteer work at the Home.

According to Activities Director Lynn Zemke, Weekley began volunteering at Orting after her husband, who was retired military, passed away.

"Gina called and asked if she could work with the residents, teaching ceramics, since that was what she did for a living," said Zemke. "She said she felt she needed to pay back for the benefits she had enjoyed as a wife, and now widow, of a retired veteran. She said instead of giving to the church, she'd give to the residents."

Assisted by resident volunteer Ken "Cap" Capley, Weekley greets each student as they arrive and gets them set-up to work on whatever project they left from their previous class. Each student



*Gina Weekley teaches Leila Bouscher special technique.*

receives individual attention from Gina, as she has taken the time to assess their strengths and abilities, likes and dislikes, and just how to provide them with the right tools for the job at hand.

Constantly on the lookout for bargains on greenware at shops around the Puget Sound area, Weekley takes the residents' orders for what they hope to work on next, and even has shop owners on the look-out for special pieces. Then, in her spare time, she travels around the area collecting the materials.

Just as important as the beautiful

artwork being created is the special bond Weekley seems to have with each resident.

"This is Alva Lee," says Weekley. "She can outglaze me."

"This is Leila Bouscher and sometimes I have to separate her and her husband John, because Leila gets too bossy and won't let John do his own work," Gina says, going from table to table.

"You know Fred," speaking of Fred Brautigam, "Fred, are you wearing your hearing aids? If not, go back and get them," she orders. Fred just smiles from ear-to-ear, letting her know he has them.

Then, in came Gladys Barnhart. The 'Weekley gruffness' – always given away by a twinkle in her eye – softened, and taking Gladys's hands in her own, the duo treated everyone to a perfectly pitched, harmonized rendition of "In the Garden".

Gina celebrated her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday with a special party given by staff and residents on Jan. 24.

*Please visit the WDVA V-NET to see additional photos related to this article.*

## VET-V Programming Board

A new fiber-optic cable system recently installed at Retsil will allow broadcasting directly to every TV at the home.

Channel 8 – replacing QVC – has been named the VET-V network. The mission of VET-V is primarily educational and informational. Initially, re-broadcasts of health care education for training purposes will be aired, but gradually schedules of events, special announcements, in-room activities, daily menus and special announcements will be added.

A board will oversee the content of the VET-V channel through a committee process.

Members of the board are Barbara Culley, Catherine Shaw, Gary Earl, Resident Dale Colbert, Ed Dolle, Jim Guthrie, Chris Addison and Debby Griswold.

## Homes Complete VA annual inspection

Both homes recently completed their annual VA Puget Sound Health Care System inspection. Considered a good preliminary to the upcoming annual Medicaid inspections that both homes can anticipate, it provides an opportunity to look at areas where improvements could be made.

Orting's out-briefing produced a basically deficiency free report.

"It is nice to have validated what we knew to be true – our staff is doing an excellent job," said Soldiers Home Superintendent Jerry Towne. "Inspectors – who brought along eight trainees to observe – said the home record keeping is exceptional, our custodians are to be highly commended, our pharmacy is very well run, and they are impressed with the healthy interaction between residents and employees."

For Orting, this comes on the heels of an infraction-free Medicaid inspection completed last fall.

Superintendent Bob Jones said the Veterans Home's review echoed that of Orting.

"The inspectors were very, very complimentary about our social work program – which is a major step up from last year," said Jones.

"In fact, they commented it may be the best they've seen out of all their inspections."

Jones said the inspection team also remarked about the quality of care the residents are receiving in the nursing program.

"They said the residents look healthy, the wards are clean and the staff are dedicated," added Jones. "I'd say they were impressed."

## Front gate update



*The new front entrance to the Soldiers Home will include an Emergency Enunciator Panel to allow fire and emergency personnel quick identification of a building in alarm.*



# Central Office Review

## Teamwork—and math—pay off



VEMP managers Barb Logan, Ben Pineda, George Barnes, Jim Green, Jerry Quintus, Dick Venesky and (not pictured) Mac Harris earn recognition in the *Governing for Results* booklet.

Ever wonder what good those math classes in school were? Well, the Veterans Estate Managers at Central Office have found a way to utilize what they learned and provide better, more efficient service to their clients.

An ever-increasing caseload – causing overload and burn out to the VEMP managers – prompted Director John King to challenge the team to figure out a way to solve the dilemma. Their solution: a risk assessment system for their clients, since all clients' needs are not equal.

## Quality Manager Hired

Christine (Chris) Touris will be joining the WDVA team as Quality and Strategic Planning Manager beginning Feb. 12.

Touris comes to WDVA from Lewis County, where she held the position of Director of General Administration. She has 22 years of experience in effective leadership, management, communication, and team building including seven years in the Air Force Quality and Strategic Planning environment. Her experience in the Air Force involved leading, facilitating and coordinating the Senior Non-commissioned Officers' Academy in Quality and Strategic Planning.

Touris has a Ph.D. in Educational Administration and Leadership from the University of Southern California, which she earned while serving in the Air Force as Chief Master Sergeant.

We welcome Chris to WDVA.

The team, under the leadership of George Barnes, started using parameters to rate clients based on their living situation, the number of transactions (usually disbursements) made each month and number of telephone calls involved in the case per month. From these guidelines, they came up with a weighted scale that allows more equitable distribution of clients among the VEMP managers.

For example, a client rated as a "1" is equal to one client. A client rated as a "2" is equivalent to having two clients rated as "1", and a "4" is the highest, equaling four clients rated as "1".

Barnes – based on the field exam done by VA – does an initial evaluation. After 60 days, a re-evaluation is done and thereafter an annual evaluation is done. Based on the weighted rating, each manager's caseload is adjusted to provide a more equal distribution of clients.

Fortunately, a computer system called Computrust was already in place. This system has the capabilities to allow the team to devise special reports that show complete histories of all the data needed to make these re-evaluations at a moment's notice.

This new system has allowed for an increase in caseload while maintaining quality services to our veterans. "It has saved us from going crazy," said VEMP manager Dick Venesky. "Our caseload has increased to where a full-time manager can handle 249 weighted clients. Keep in mind that 249 clients all rated "4" would be impossible to handle, but this system works and works well."

So well, in fact, that they were selected to receive the Governor's Quality Award for the July 2000 quarter. The teamwork – and the math – paid off.

## New Secretary of VA appointed

President Bush has appointed Anthony J. Principi – a decorated veteran of the Vietnam War – as his secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

As secretary of Veterans Affairs, Principi will return to an agency at which he was acting secretary under former President George Bush in 1992. He had become deputy secretary after holding staff jobs on the Senate Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committees. A Naval Academy graduate, Principi is considered a staunch veterans advocate, and has long supported expanding military and veterans benefits.

# Vet Services Review

## Bremerton opens new Community Outreach Office



(From left to right) Alfie Alvarado-Ramos, Cherise McArthur, John Lee, Lynda Reese, Richard Stewart and John King in front of the new office. Willie Slusarski not pictured.

area, as well as handling all other veterans benefits claims.

Richard Stewart, WDVA's manager of the Outreach Center, is optimistic about these partnerships providing benefits not just to these soon-to-be veterans, but also to the state.

"Pre-separation starts taking place as many as 180 days before discharge," said Stewart, "so by the time the final separation papers are signed, our military people know that the VA is going to take care of them after they leave active-duty."

Stewart said these clients will know that their disability claim, if warranted, is already in place and their educational benefits are ready for them to start school right away. Instead of moving back to another state, they will buy homes, start school, find employment and raise their families here in Washington.

Besides federal and state representatives, WDVA relies strongly on veteran service organizations as viable members of this winning partnership. Service officers from the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Disabled American Veterans (DAV),

the American Legion (AL), and other veterans groups, all provide volunteers on a rotating basis to ensure active-duty military personnel and veterans receive the benefits they are entitled to.

The center is located at 262 and 264 Burwell St. in downtown Bremerton.



## OUTSTANDING VETERANS AWARDS

Alex Deluao was awarded a Certificate of Honorable Mention for being nominated as one of Washington State's Outstanding Veterans for the year 2000, in the outstanding employee category. These awards are reviewed and awarded by the Governor's Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee.

December 1, 2000

Dear Director King,

I would like to take this opportunity to express thanks from the veterans of Stevens, Ferry and Pend Oreille counties for the support received from your office to help us put on our 3<sup>rd</sup> Stand Down. The building that held all of our merchandise for this event was burned down only 2 weeks before the scheduled event. A phone call from us to **Mr. Ric Price** was made and when told of our plight, WDVA was able to furnish us with blankets so that we could still put on this event.

During this event that was conducted Sept. 22, 23 & 24, we were able to provide service to 2617 veterans, spouses, and family members. This is the largest event of this kind held in the Inland Northeast and has grown from 516 our first year. *It is only with assistance from organizations like yours that we are able to "Make A Difference" in the lives of these people.*

Sincerely,

Ken Walden, Co-Chairperson  
Tri-County Veterans Stand Down